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A Gateway to the Campus

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THESIS PROPOSAL
OF
CATERINA FRISONE

A GATEWAY
TO THE CAMPUS

Submitted to the Faculty
the School of Architecture
Syracuse University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Architecture II

July 16, 1987

Caterina Frisone

INTRODUCTION

My Thesis proposal is the design of a master plan for Syracuse University. The S.U. campus was my vehicle to experiment and apply the ideas and principles derived from my previous historical research and urban analysis: The subject of these two, in fact, has been the American College Campus, not only as a type of Architecture Planning, but also as a reflection of the american educational system.

The word CAMPUS, more than any other term, sums up a unique physical character of the American college and university. When it was first used to describe the grounds of a college, probably at Princeton, in the late eighteenth century CAMPUS had simply its Latin meaning, a field and described the green expansiveness already distinctive of American schools. But gradually the word assumed wider significance, until at most colleges it came to mean the entire property, including buildings. So today we can call it urban campus that might possess nothing remotely resembling a field.

The reason of this choice derives either from personal interests or from general knowledge about the uniquely American contribution the American college campus gave to urbanism.

I have always been interested in this subject, and in a certain way fascinated by the model of life American Universities provide for their students and completely lacking in Italian universities. Actually American universities have always constituted a wide field of research for the architectural culture offering many experimental possibilities of new technologies and shapes. And, finally, since I did some previous studies about European universities in preparation of the Thesis I did in Italy, I wanted to make a comparison between them and the research I am going to do.

CAMPUS HISTORICAL RESEARCH

The first goal of my research was investigating the origins of the American college planning and seeing which urban characteristics and conditions started to define the American college as real "American", detached from its sources - Oxford and Cambridge, England, until the point American colleges didn't present English traces anymore.

From the historical study in fact, we can understand the urban characteristics which identify the American campus as different from its previous examples and as a unique example of American urban planning. Unlike its predecessors, the American campus is settled far from the city, with free-standing pavillons, far from the road, forming rows of buildings facing the yard, called campus, all surrounded by unspoiled nature. The attraction for nature, the religious beliefs, the community sense and, sometimes, a devotion or a wanted connection with the governor, had a big influence on the urban settlement and planning of the campus. From the history, we can classify the countless number of campuses in different ways; by time, by geographic characteristics and location, by style and religious matrix, by urban settlement and architectural typology, by their development and the common experiences they went through.

In fact, in spite of its birthdate, sometimes, within the same campus, we can find different urban settlements caused by different planning processes, which each time imposed a particular order or style, reflecting the ideas and the urban influences of that time. In some cases the changes improved the previous situation, but in others the results compromised a potential good development of the future -

CAMPUS URBAN ANALYSIS

After the first chronological study of the most meaningful campus in the U.S.A., my approach to the research was mainly oriented toward the need to read a campus plan through its very simplest information (mass and open space - solid and void - figure/ground drawings), rather than to learn its history, functions or academic facilities, as well: The composition of dots in the figure/ground, very easily communicated boundaries, edges, hierarchy, sequential situations - provocative. They also represent the most tangible tradition of

Since the main characteristic of the American campus is the free standing pavillon typology and since my interest is much more architectural than urban, I decided that even if the scale of the plans I studied was very large, the goal of my research could have been reduced to a more restricted study about the relationship that exists between the single building and the space around it, how the building overstands or just controls the space, how many buildings together create another kind of space, how one space is connected to the others in my analysis. I tried to compare the best examples of quads of different (in genesis and history) campuses, either as an ideal shape (through the neoclassical master plan) or as a result of it (through the today situation) looking for a key-note which would have allowed me to apply the same principles of order to other less lucky examples. With a more complete analysis of boundaries, entrances, sequence and functional division, I tried, finally, to define an outline to use as a reference in my design for the S.U. campus.

CONCLUSION

The great majority of institutions in this country are situated within or at the edge of the borough or small towns where there are open spaces upon all sides and the effect is suburban and parklike. This means that even if Universities, in the past, generated new ways of settlements or particular urban situations, they kept their image of separate world and without permitting the city to suffocate them.

Among the several solutions that the park-like University scheme generated, it's certainly true that the architectural effect is gained by a more compact grouping. In fact, nowadays scattered buildings lose the effect of those beautiful and tranquil enclosed or partly enclosed spaces, or quads as they are found at Oxford, Cambridge, Princeton and Yale.

Not all the campuses possess clearly defined quadrangles, but the ones that do, seem to be more focussed and provocative. They also represent the most tangible tradition of enclosed urban space in the USA, and that is directly attributed to Thomas Jefferson. The image of Jefferson's lawn is imprinted on countless successive campuses in America, from Cornell to Columbia to Minnesota. The order is usually less rigorous than the original but the stable presence of public space remains: nevertheless the key note is order. It's the first law of knowledge and it should be also of those environments whose business is to discover and to disseminate knowledge. Hence it will be my tendency to return an order to the present chaotic condition of the campus, basing my decisions on the past attempts to create an order for this quad.

The history of the campus starts in 1870 with the choice of the site, and the planning of seven buildings, one for each academic discipline. The Hall of Languages was the first in 1871, but it stood alone for 16 years. The very first master plan for S.U. is dated 1906.

A plan that oriented the campus on the north-south axis and converted the open playing field, called Old Oval, into the Great Quadrangle, bordered on all sides by new buildings.

The second master plan, but the first recorded one, is dated 1927, proposed by architects Russell Pope and D.J. Bawn. It has been considered the most ambitious in the university history, attempting to unify the eclectic architecture. In place of the north-south axis of the previous plan, Pope and Bawn proposed a series of quadrangles. The old oval now was to be bisected into two quads, between them Hendricks Chapel.

The study of the Syracuse University campus, included an historical research (through plans at different times) and an urban analysis (through considerations about the existing urban settlement)

S. U. HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Besides studying ^{no}chronological events which characterized the development of S.U. I found useful to experiment other proposals as alternative to the masterplans, which affected deeply the future of the university during 1928 and 1962:

It was a useful exercise to discover the mistakes which caused problems today still existing. My major criticism is about the choice to change the natural N/S axis to E/W which happened in 1928, precluded an open space in front of the hill that would have always provided for a space of respect in front of the ancient buildings looking down over the city and at the same time provided an air-valve for a tight future settlement.

History of Syracuse University

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The plan had a big impact on the future campus; all the subsequent plans followed Pope and Barn's concept of a series of quadrangles and the expansion southward. The Great Depression (1931) suspended the funds so that everything stopped until 1942. In 1946 S.U. welcomed World War II veterans. Chancellor Tolley expanded the campus, building 40 major today-existing buildings and developing the new South Campus and buying up land surrounding the main quad.

In 1948, University architect Rotunno prepared his master plan. The main quad was to be narrowed, lined on 3 sides with new brick buildings. There was to be a new quad of six buildings to the west of Hendricks Chapel. Across University Place, where Pope and Bawn had envisioned dormitories, Rotunno designed a north quadrangle devoted to the fine arts. Housing was to be concentrated east of Walnut Park, both north and south of Euclid Avenue. In Rotunno's plan, many buildings would have been sacrificed.

1969 Chancellor Tolley retired after the construction of Geology, Bird Library, Newhouse II, Physics, Student Health Center (Arch. King and King who also built all dormitories, Shaw, Watson, Marion, Flint, Graham, Day, Women's Building, Archbold Gym after the 1947 fire)

1971 The 7th Chancellor (Melvin A. Eggers) starts his administration.

THE PROJECT: IDEAS AND CHOICES

1973 Egger's administration presents a campus plan. The new policy set geographic boundaries for the University's area (Harrison Street to the north, Thornden Park to the east, Oakwood Cemetery to the south and Irving Avenue to the west). The policy's key elements were consolidation, conservation and completion, using the old structures in desperate need of repair and renovation. The cost of conservation was half the price of constructing (H.L. added an entire floor). The completion of the program was constituted by the construction of the Carrier Dome and the Schine Center.

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY URBAN ANALYSIS

I based my analysis on five parameters, related to the urban settlement of S.U. and surrounding areas. These parameters are: boundaries, entrances, circulation, function divisions and open space definition. In the situation, today, I consider them as a problem and since there was not a set program to follow (besides the already approved proposals by the administration) I decided to focus on these, in order to study my proposal for the master plan. In fact, as a master plan, I mean an over-all idea which would provide an order to the existing mass through a major definition of open spaces, functions, boundaries, and entrances, which would allow feelings like location (recognition of a place - being inside the campus or outside), identification (belonging to the academic environment), movement (sequence through spaces) hierarchy (ability to differentiate the importance or not of a place).

Today, S.U. presents problems especially in the identification of boundaries and entrances. Besides the big problem caused by the car traffic which creates a cut between the old quad and the more recent development which invades the entire university during the "Dome Days" Both open spaces and function classification are not well utilized and defined but at the same time they present potentialities for a future improvement

THE PROJECT: IDEAS AND CHOICES

The main idea is the restitution of a sense of identification to either the entire property of the university or the different parts of the campus. The choice I derived from it was the organization of the university settlement through layers made of buildings and green belts, emphasizing the natural geographical form of the site. The historical growth of the campus and hierarchical importance of the buildings. The result wants to be the capacity to identify the university property as a unique urban ensemble, but at the same time, as a more complex structure, where each "layer has" its own identity and characteristics. I tried to find a balance between form and function:

Any of the two prevail on the other one—

The function is the common denominator of the different parts of the campus, but the form tries to give a response which relates to the entire design of the campus—

Generally the new additions want to complete fragmentary urban situations, but mainly try to define open spaces and create edges between one layer and another. That means that the building is always considered as an element of transition between the public space

and the private one. I considered the circulation to the university an important issue:

I provided the possibility to reach the university area for the people coming from outside the city, by opening a new exit from the highway: This will serve also the visitors coming

for special events (Dome, H. Chapel) and function as a more ceremonial entry to the campus—

The entry for the people coming from the city is still through University Avenue and that one for the student population will be mainly from East (Euclid Ave.) where almost all

the dorms and housing are located— I identified the scale of the entries with three different gateways, using always the tower as a symbol of recognition of the boundaries

on the campus. The internal vehicular circulation has been reduced leaving the access for the car only to the administration building; The chapel and to the rear part of the campus—

In this way the old quad is linked to the more recent belt of university buildings through the green band that connects the old with the new and functions as a transition element between the two layers—

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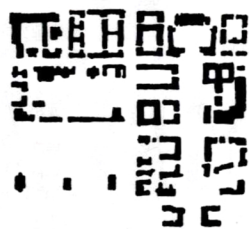
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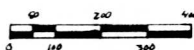
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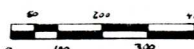
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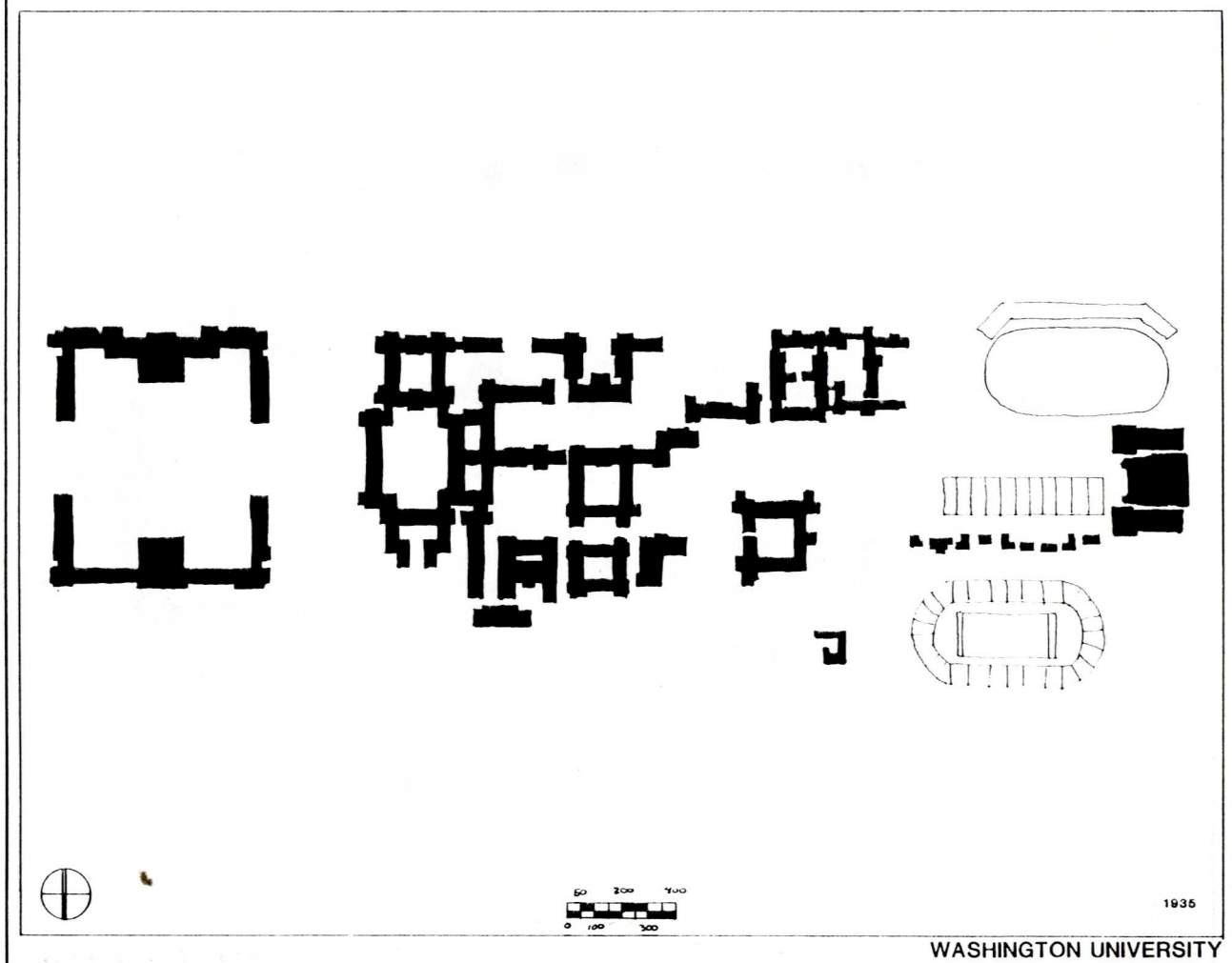
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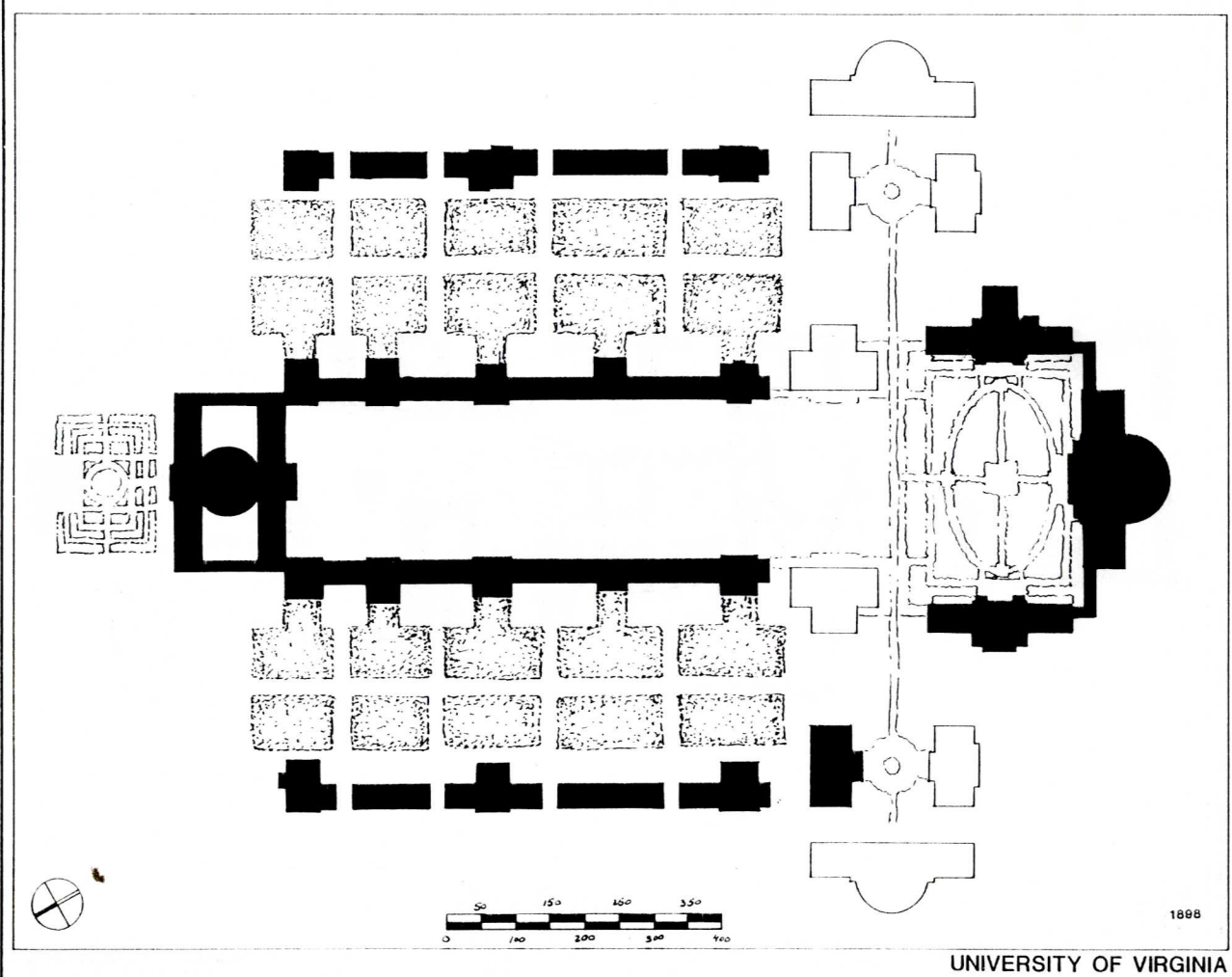


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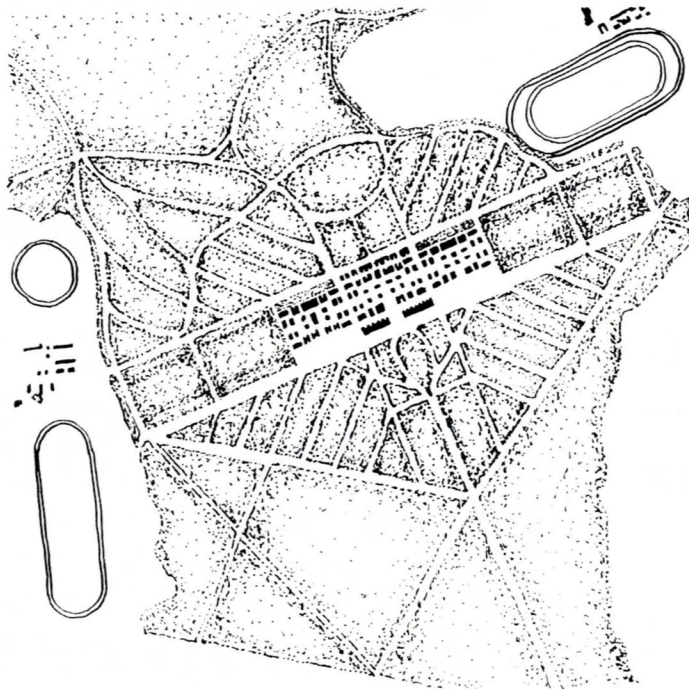
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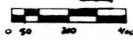
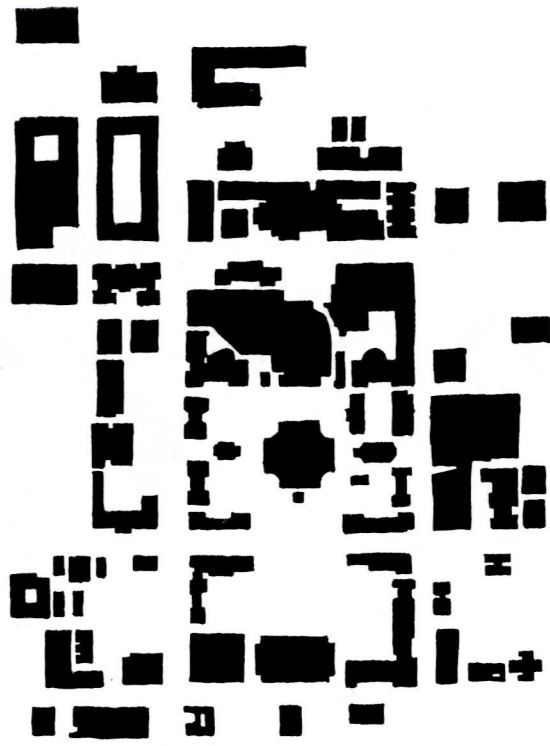
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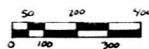
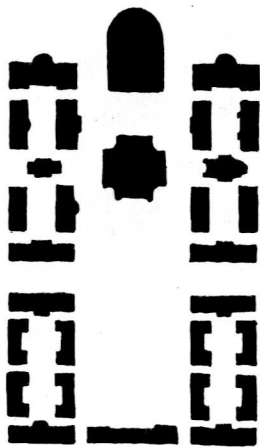
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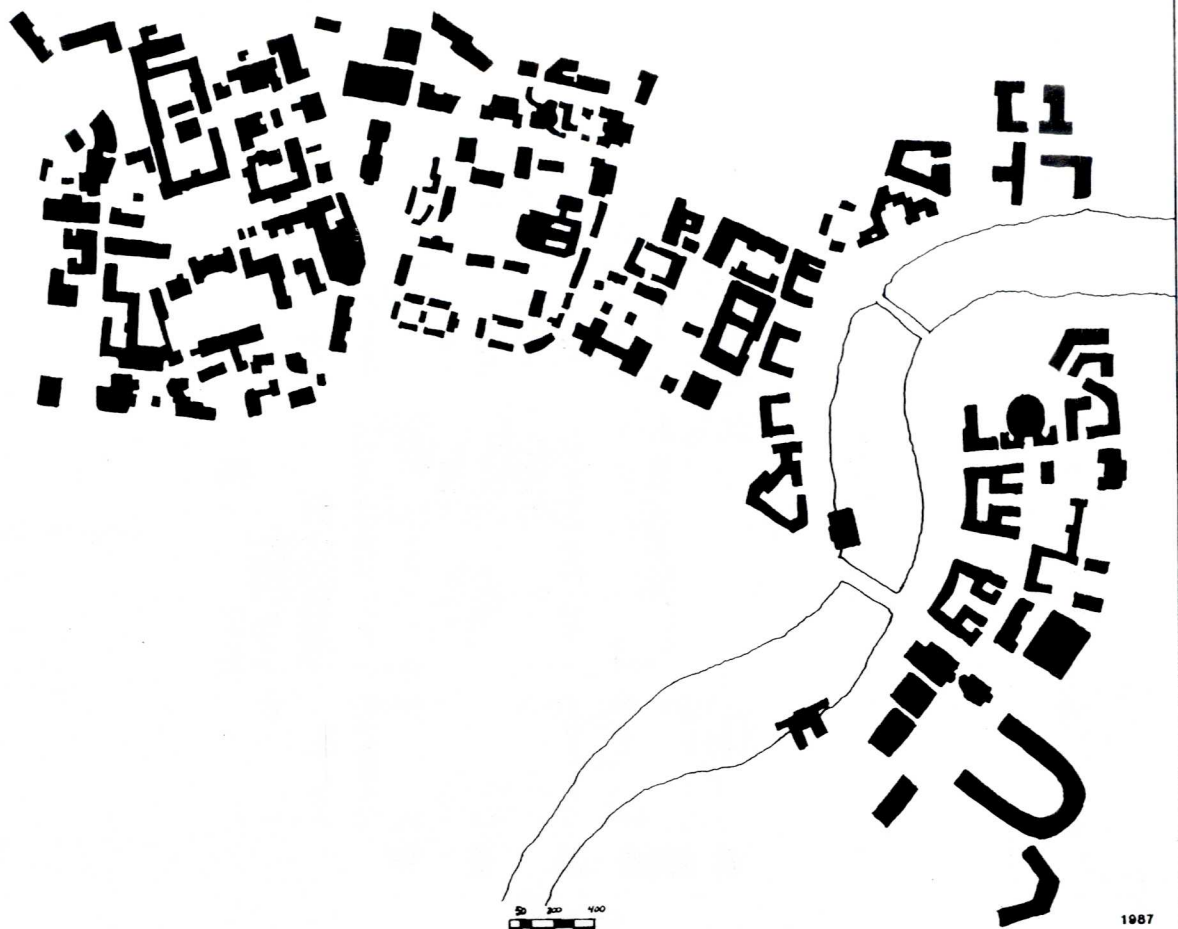
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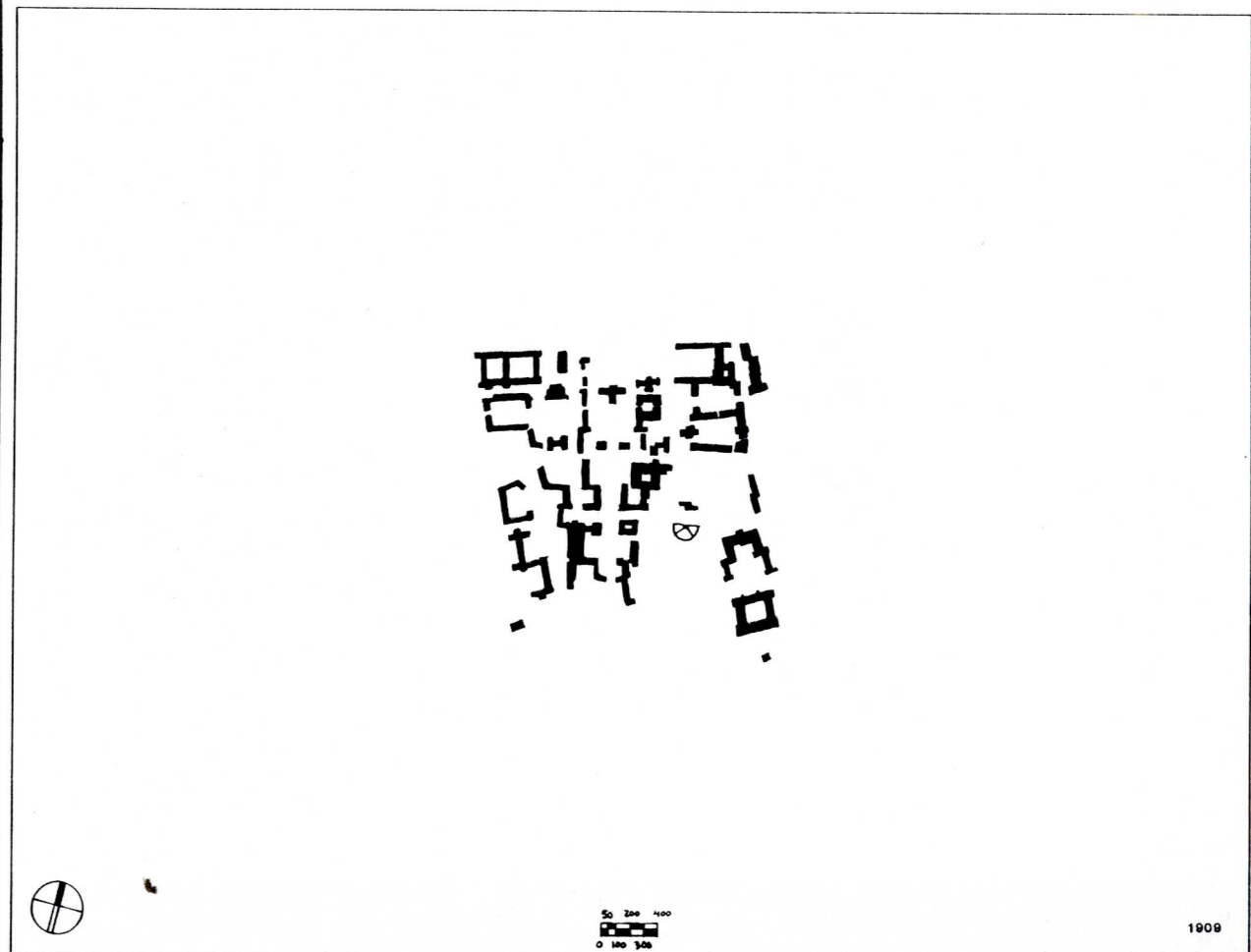
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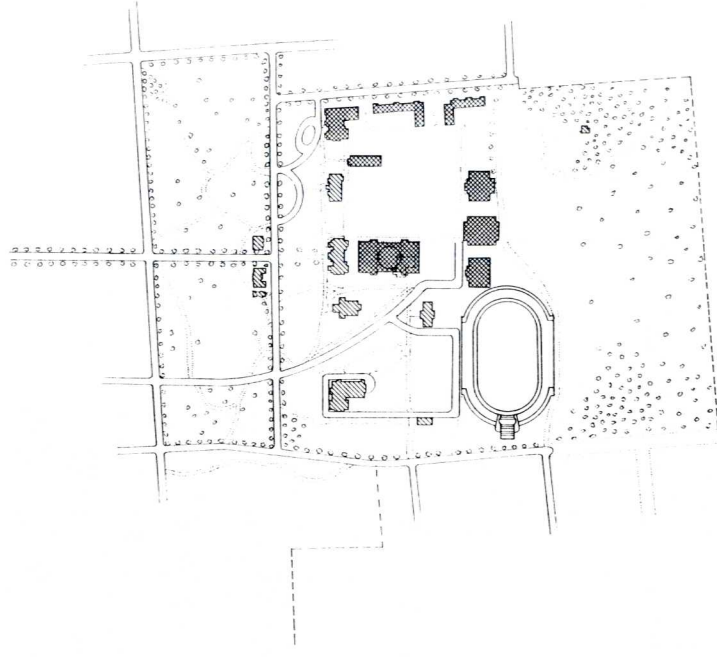
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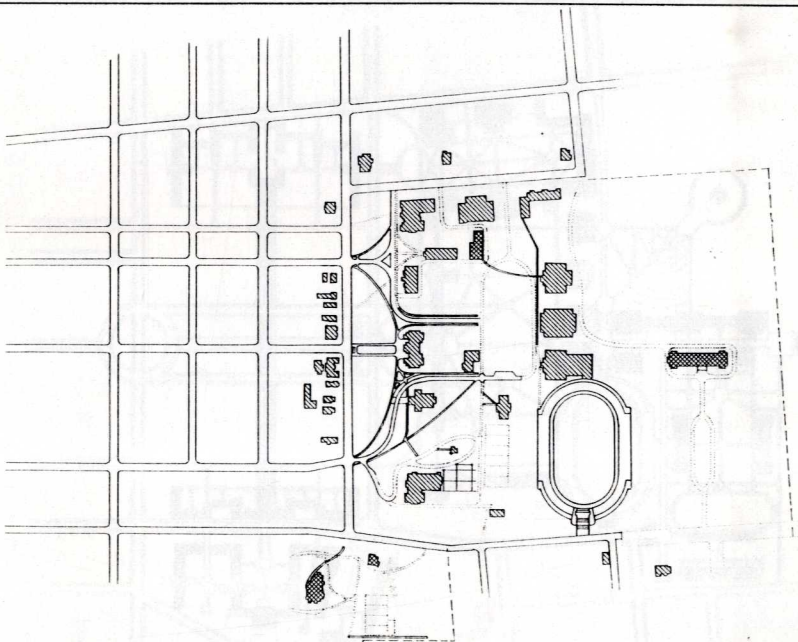


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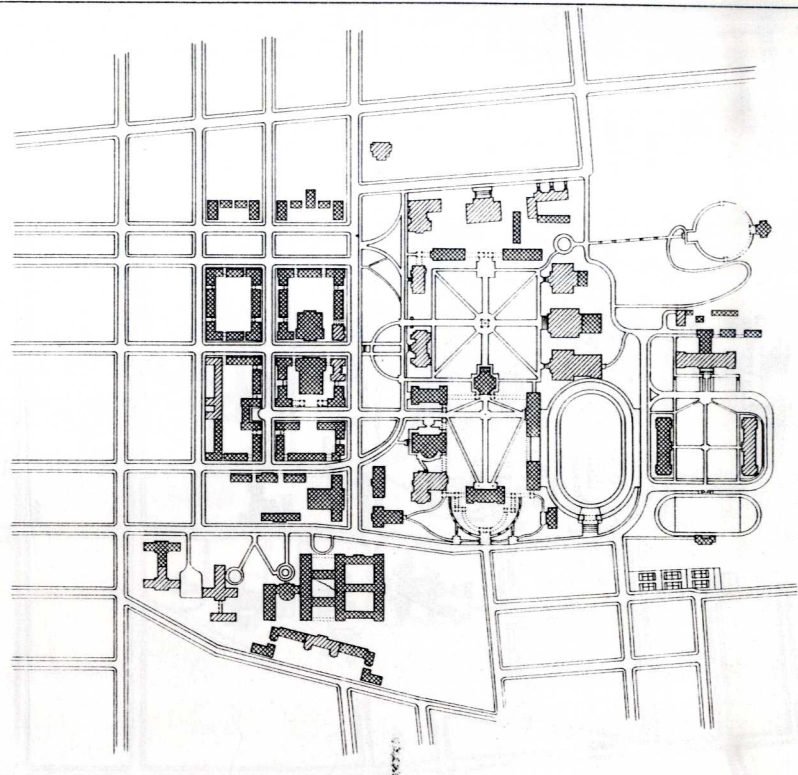
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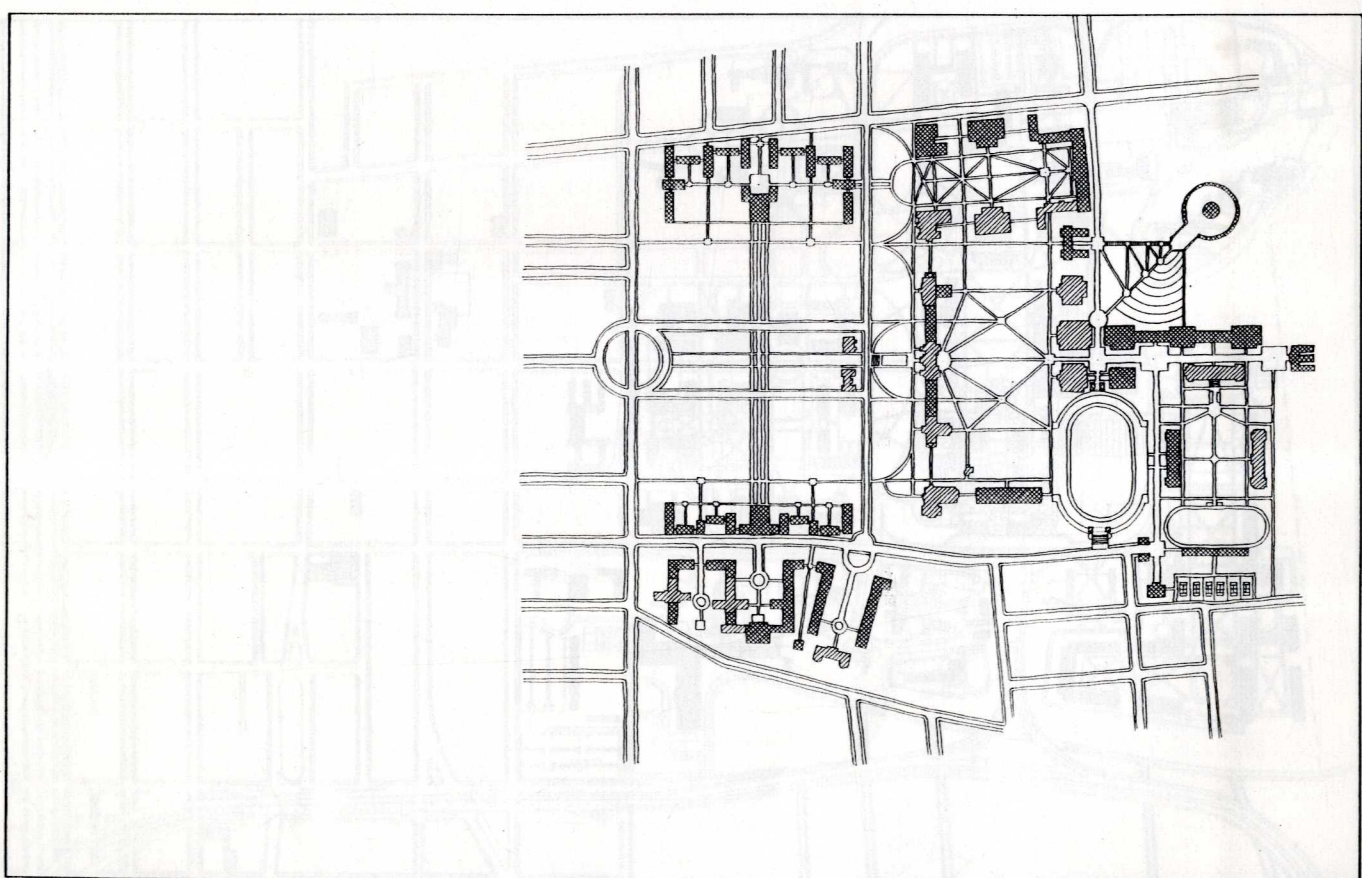
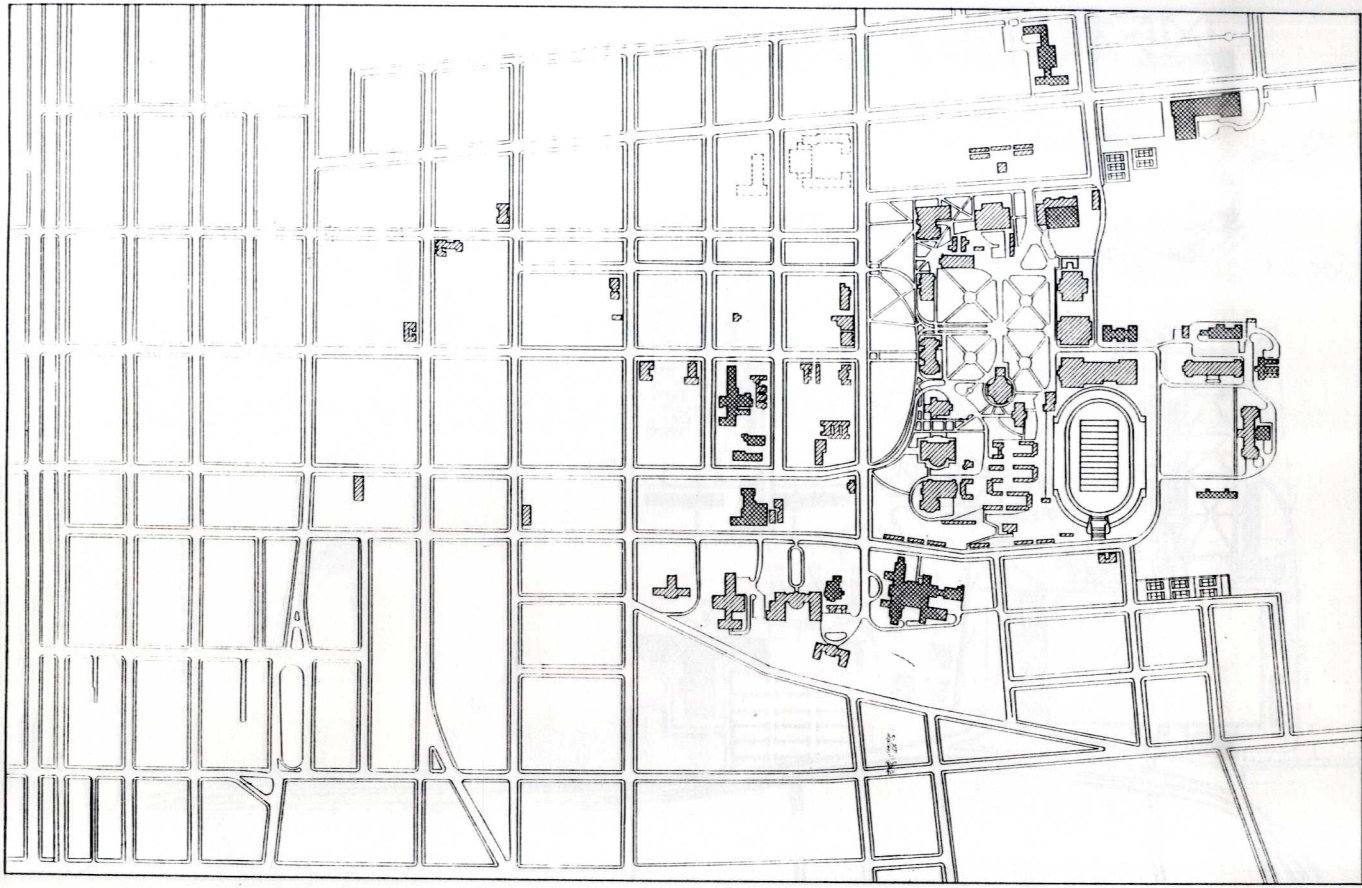
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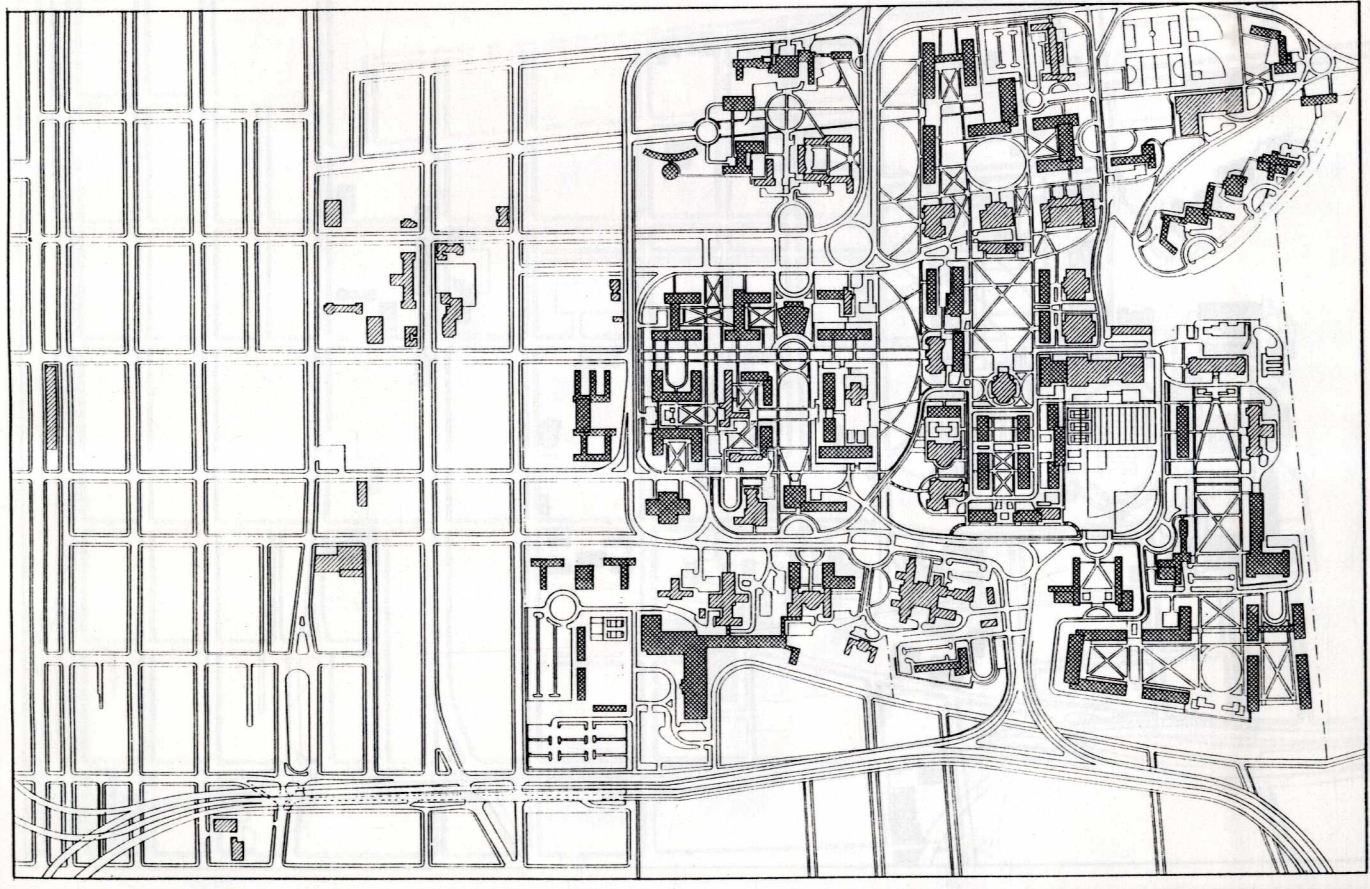


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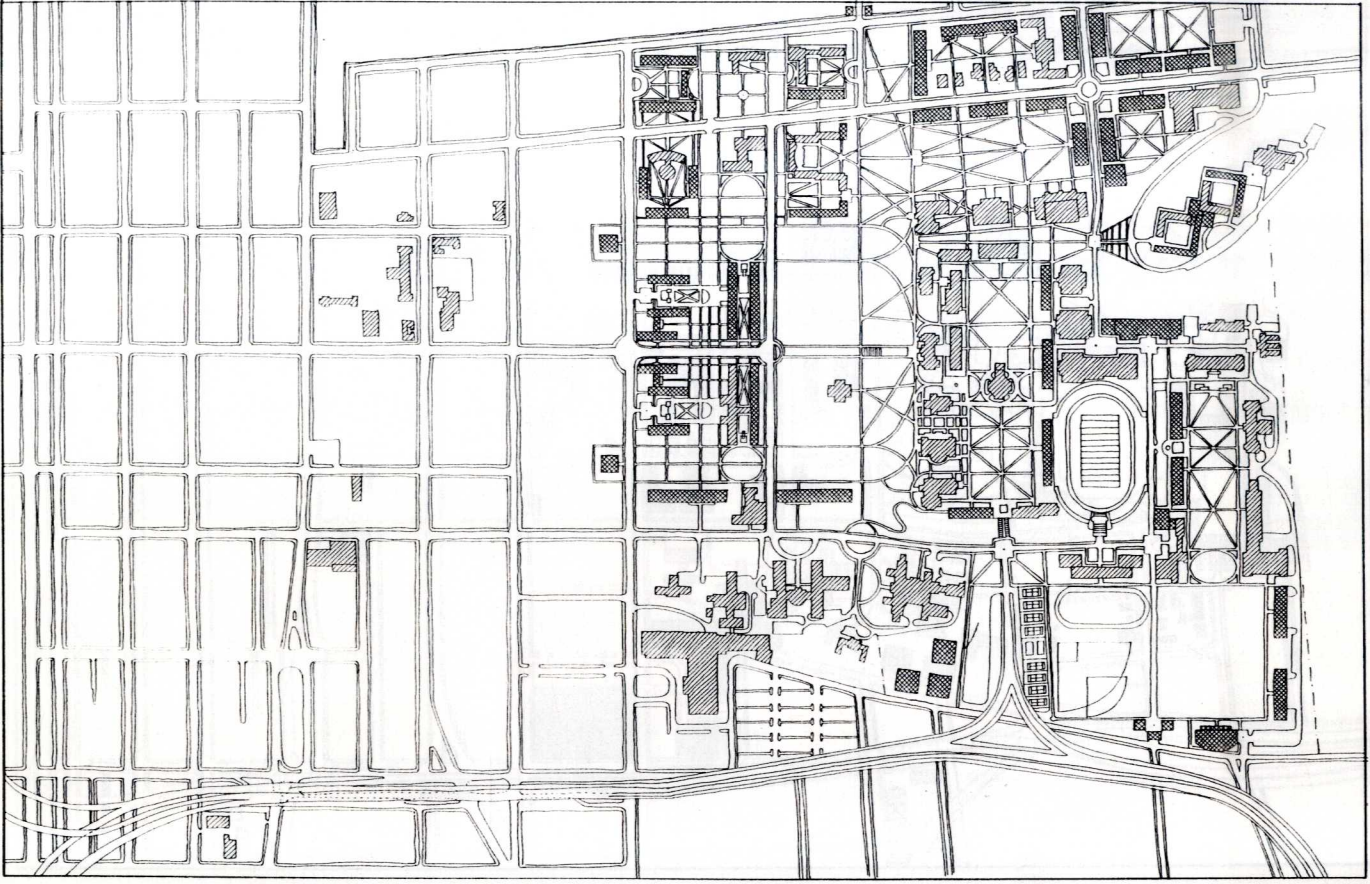


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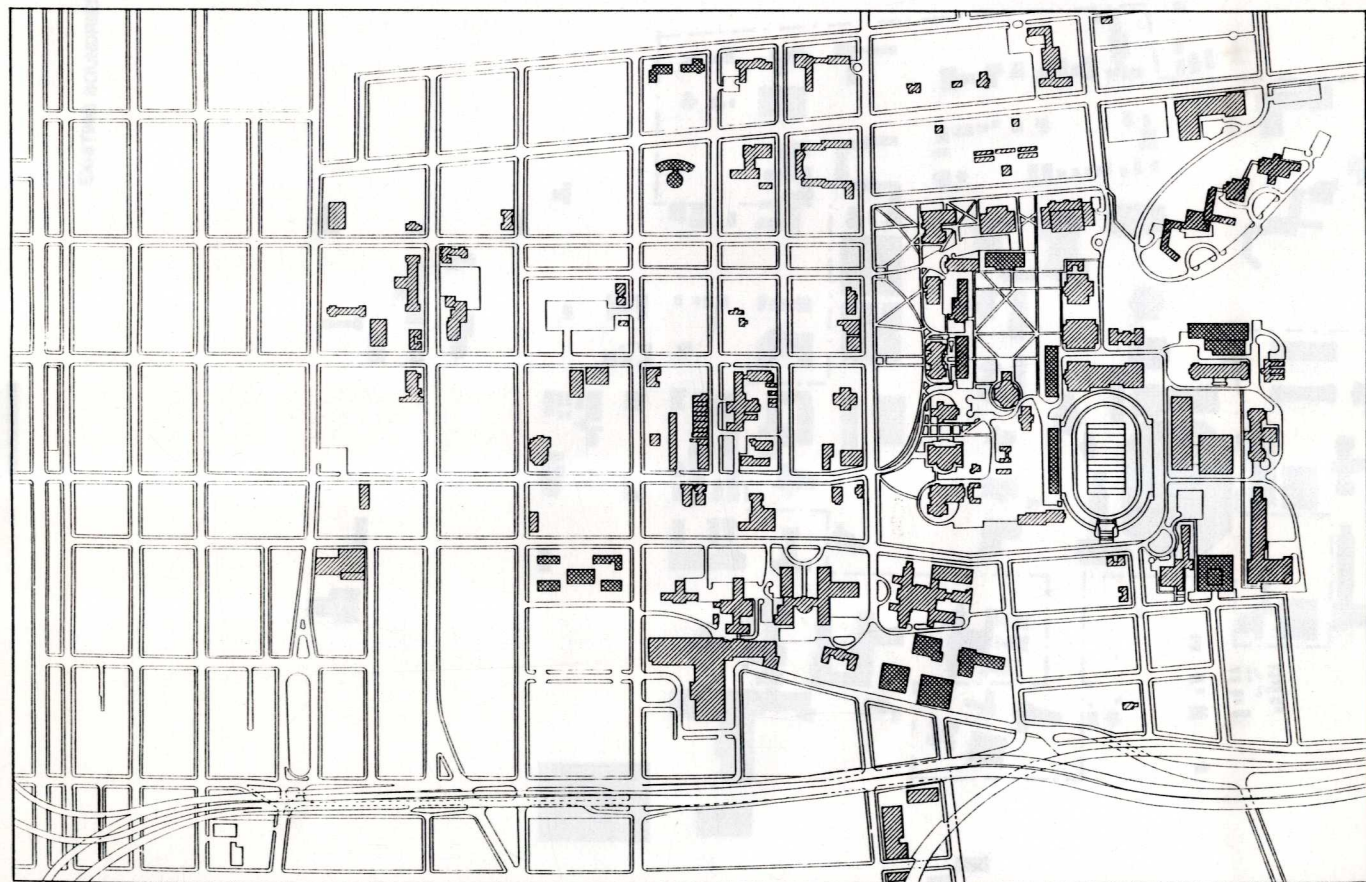




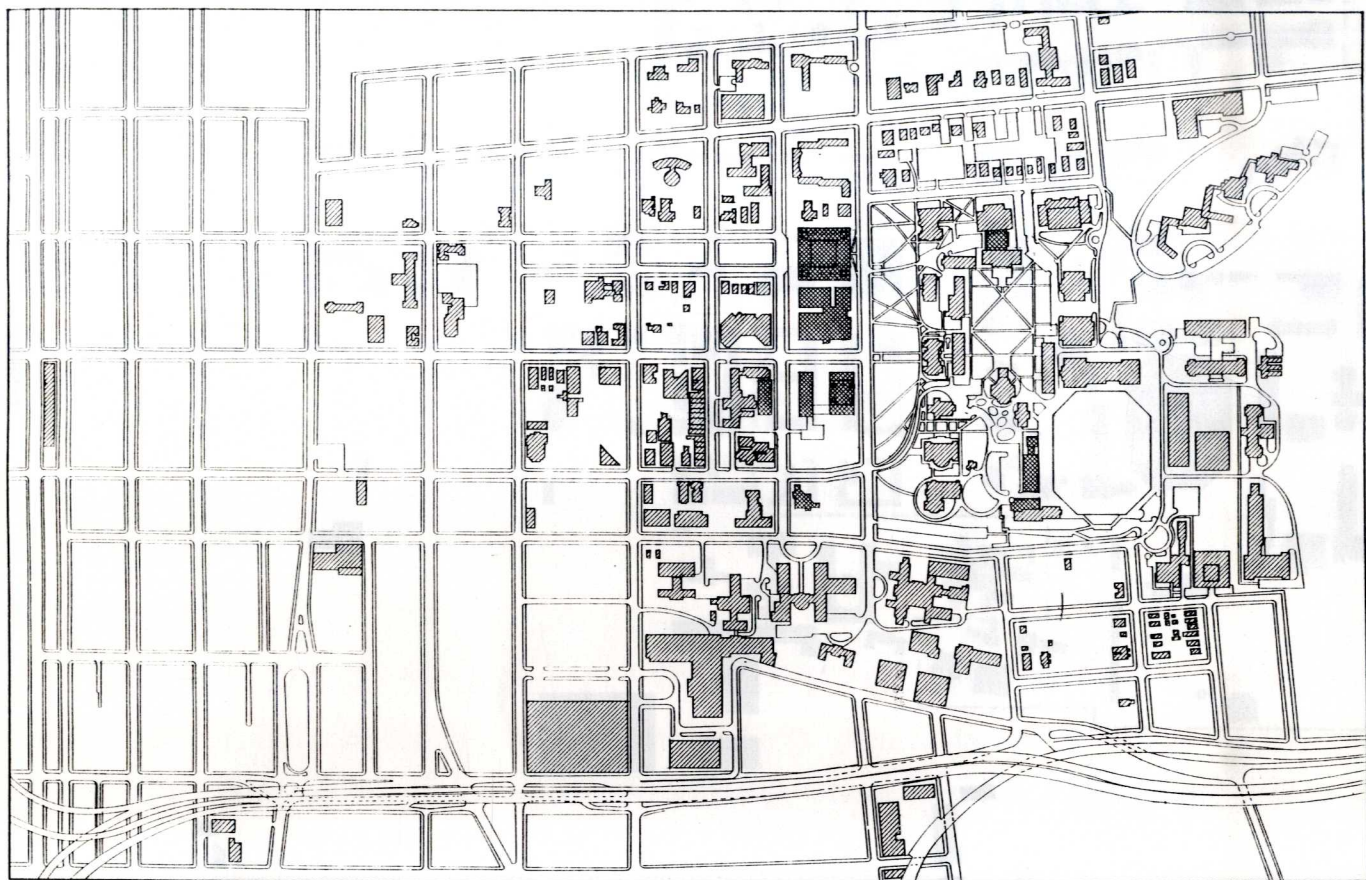
Proposed masterplan 1962



Alternative proposal to 1962 masterplan



1968



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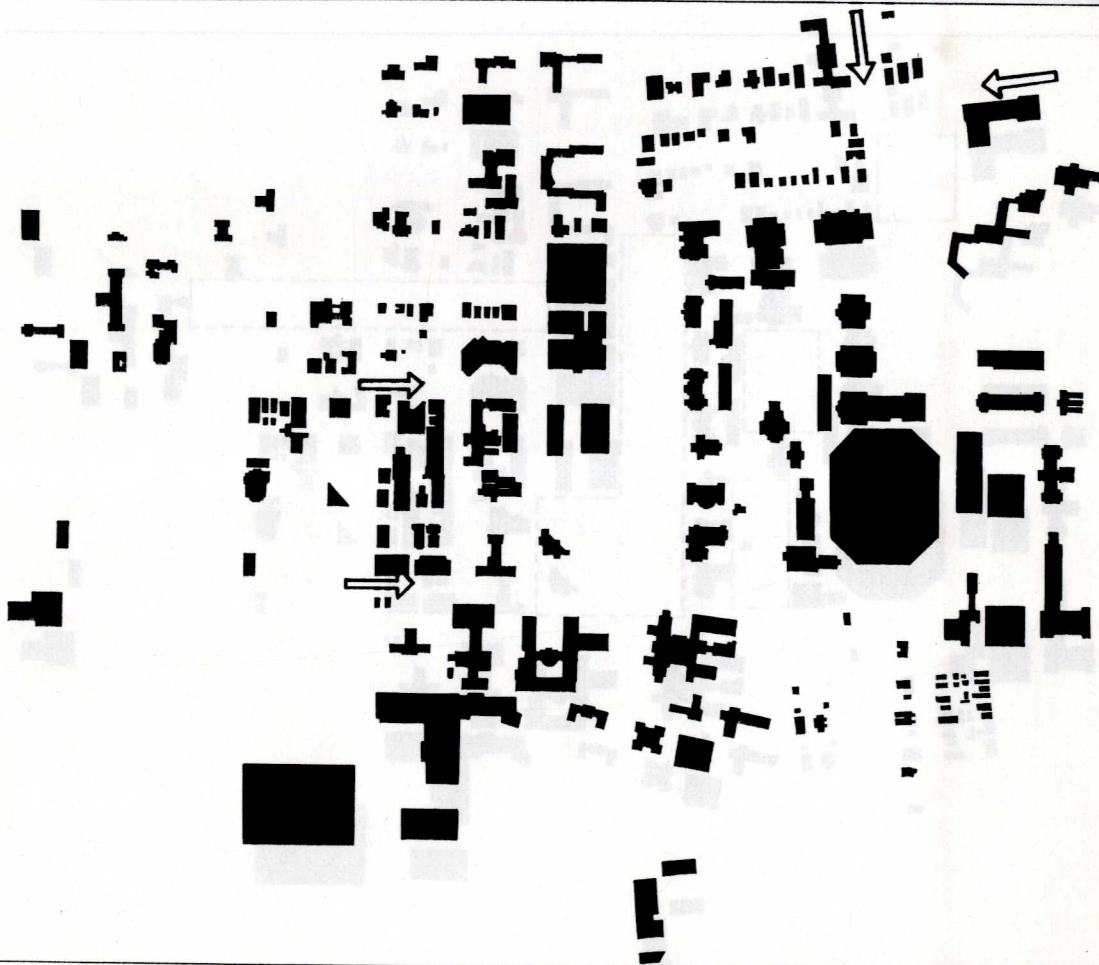
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PROPOSED ENTRIES



EXISTING ENTRIES



PROPOSED OPEN SPACES



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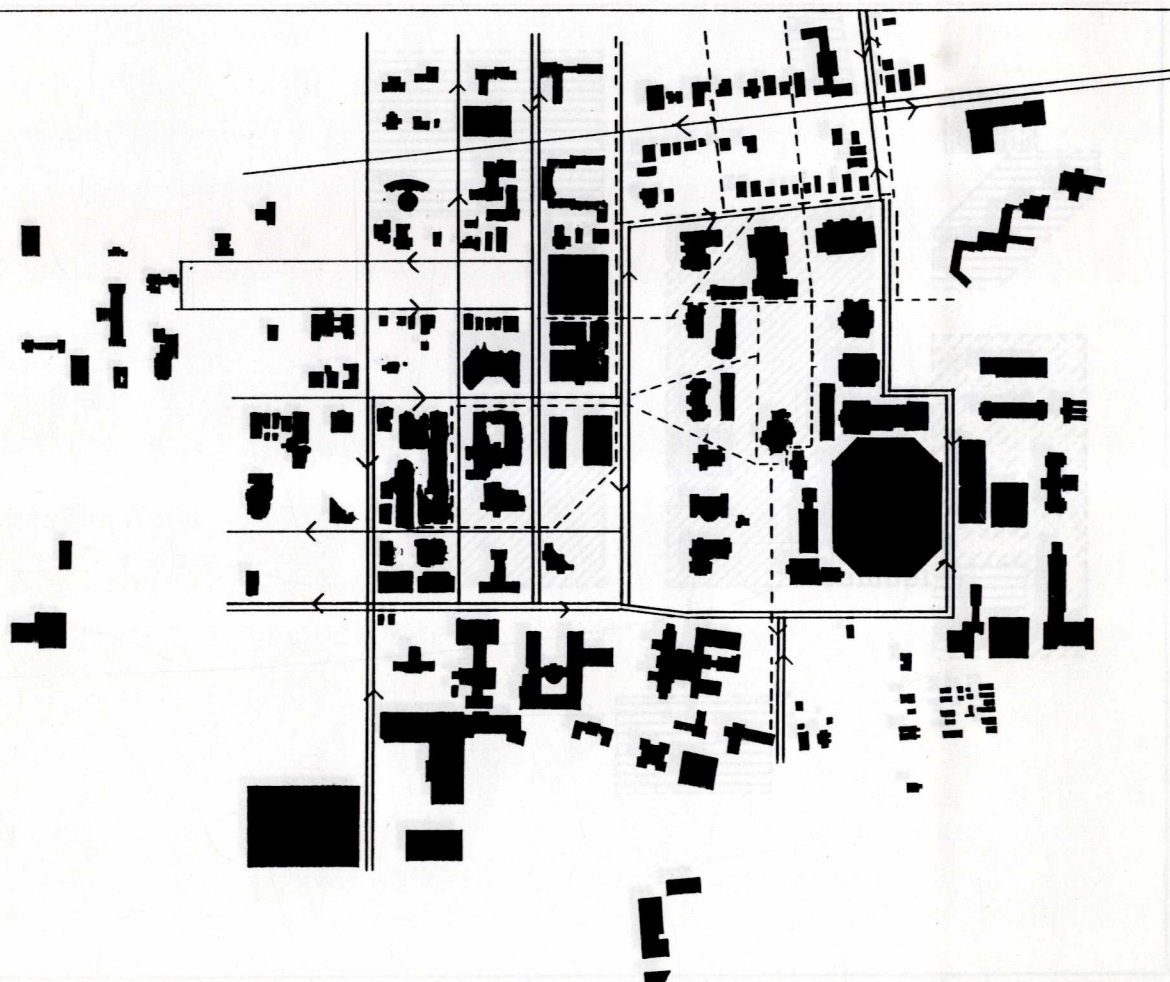
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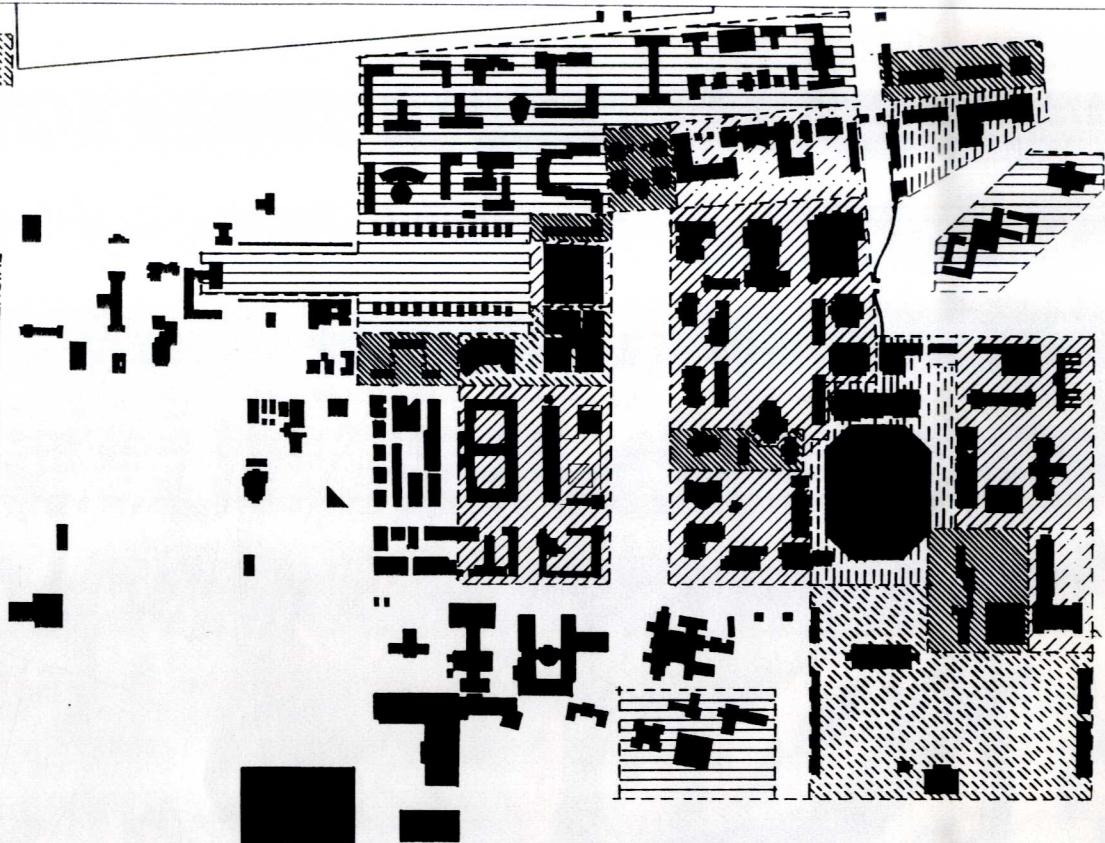
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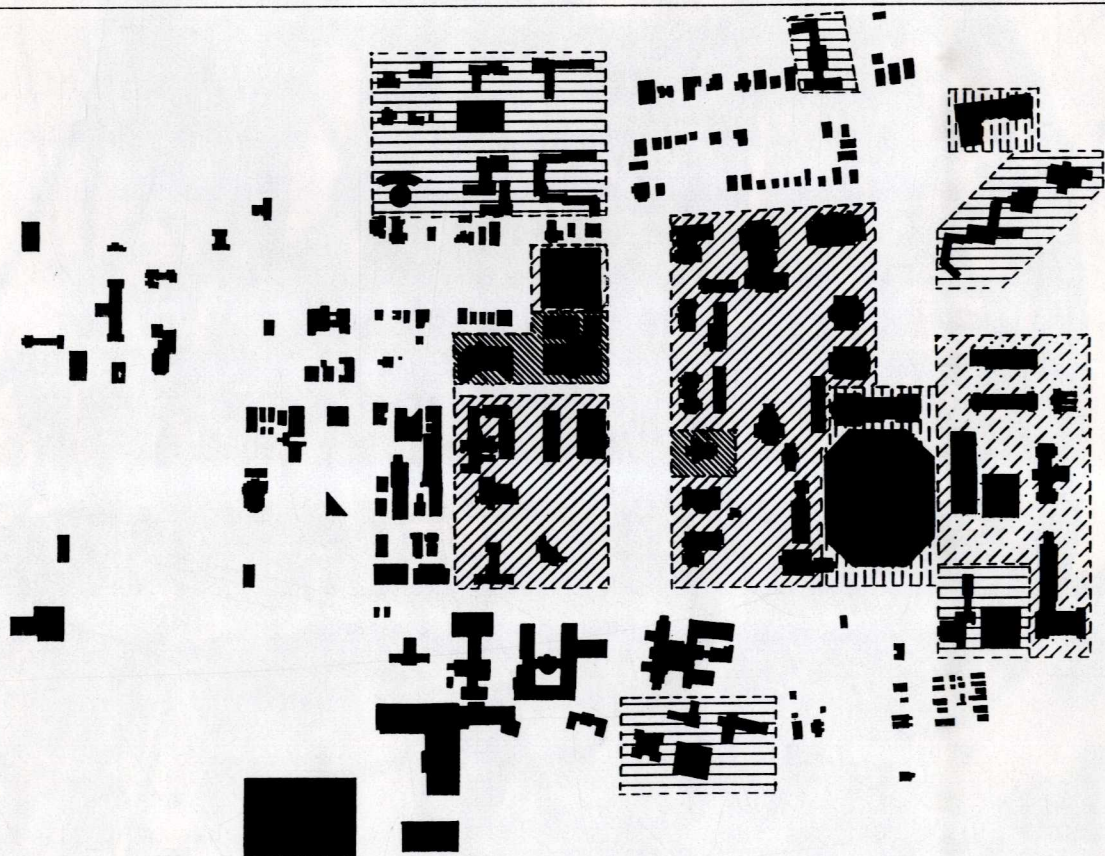
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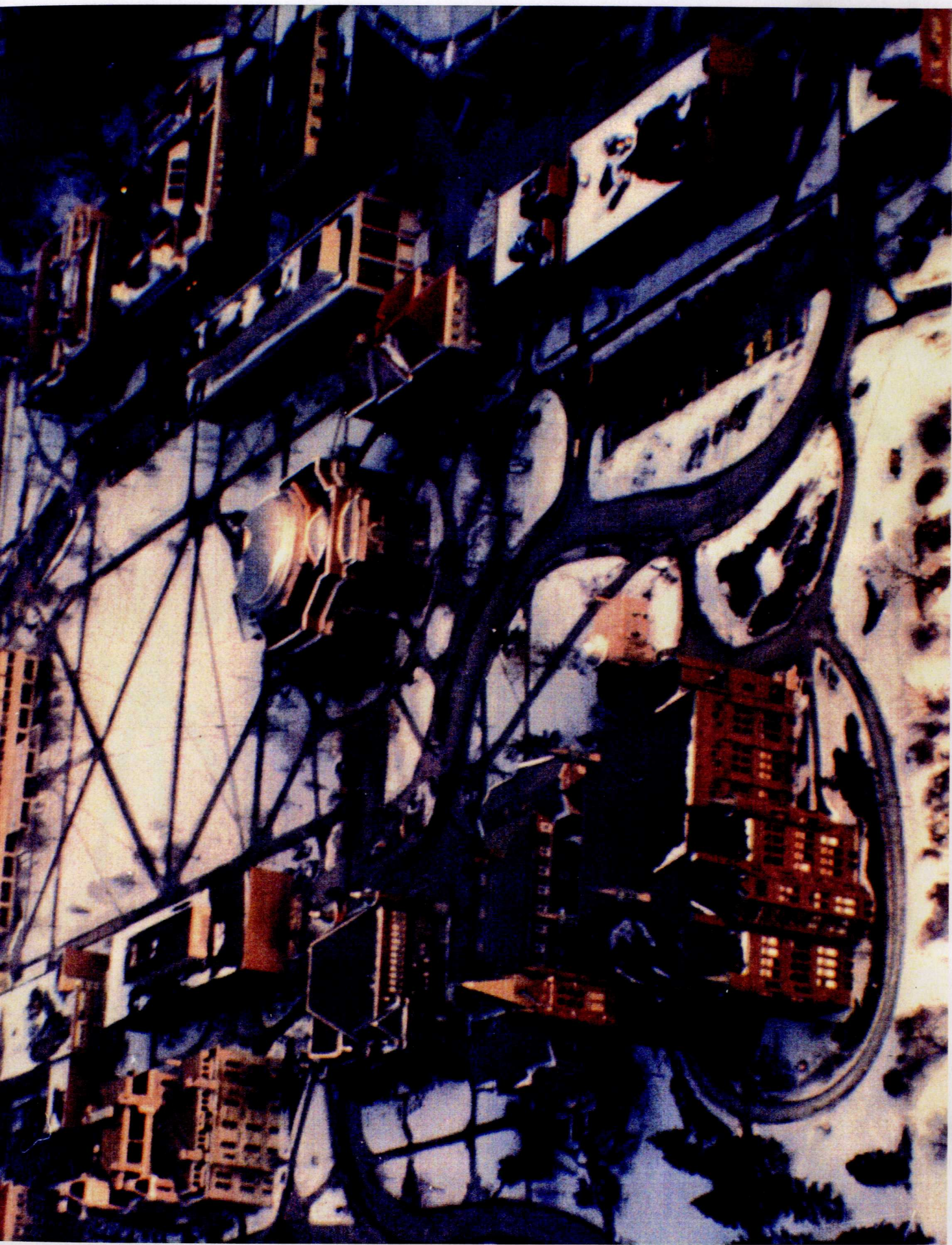
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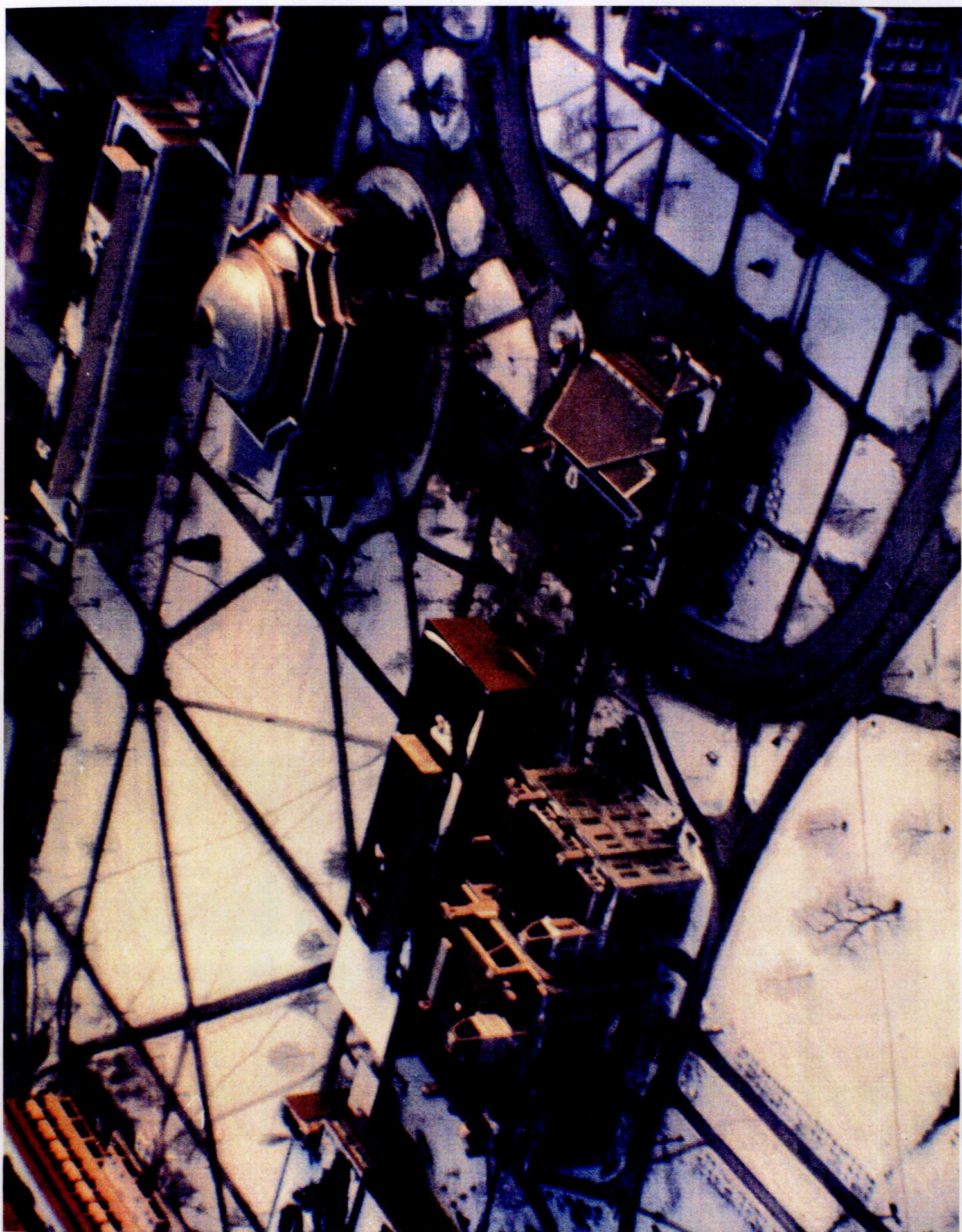


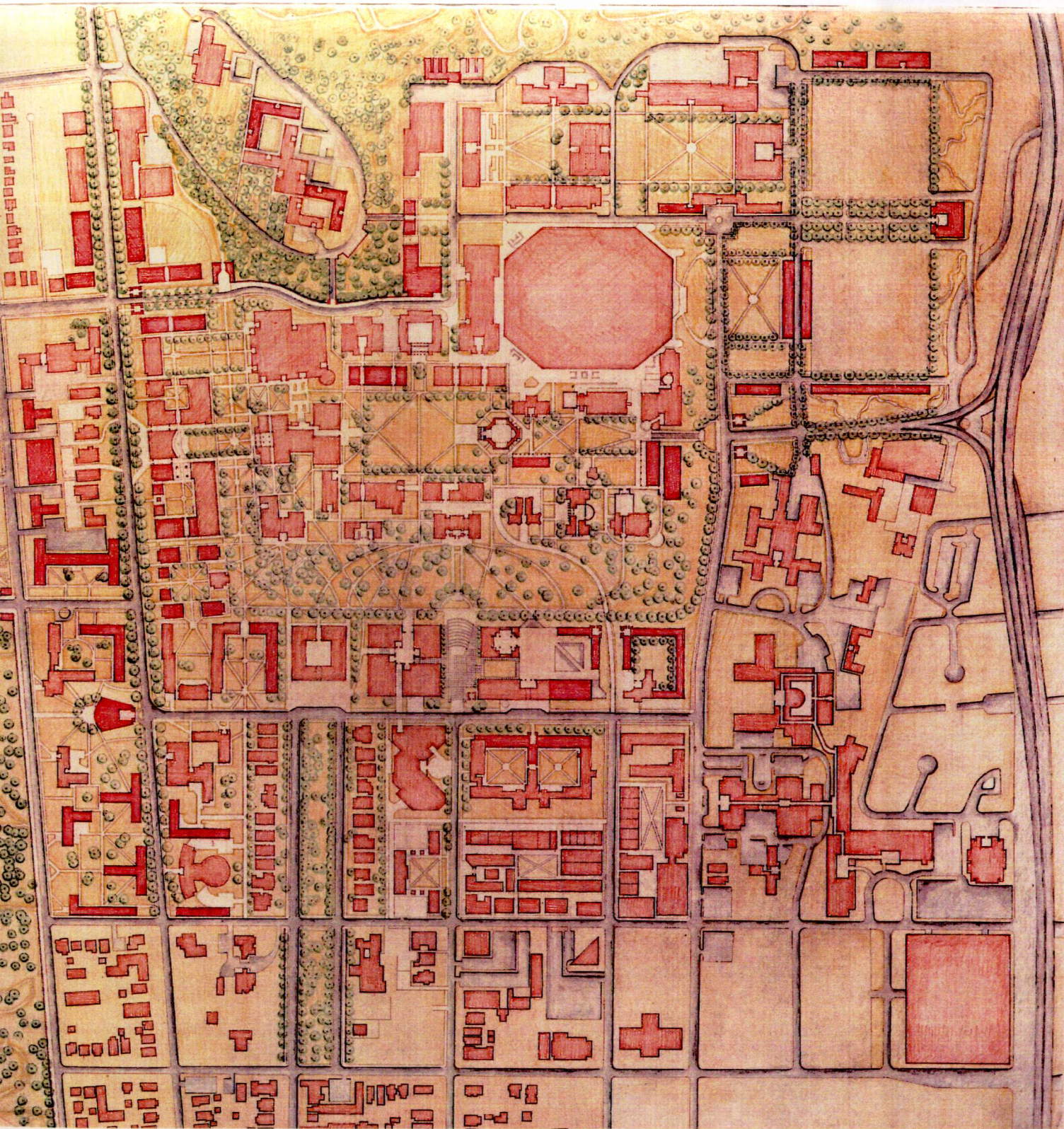
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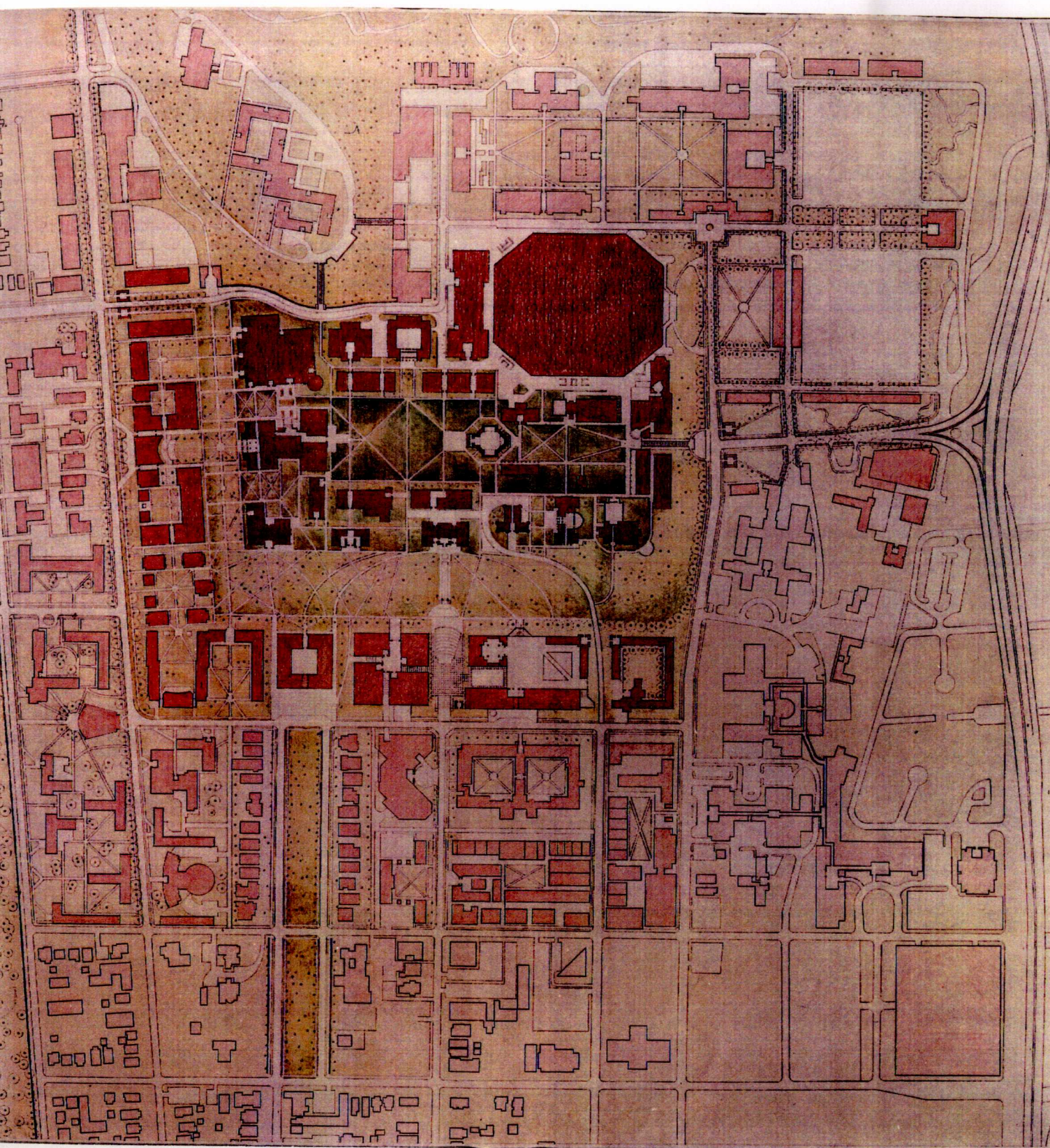
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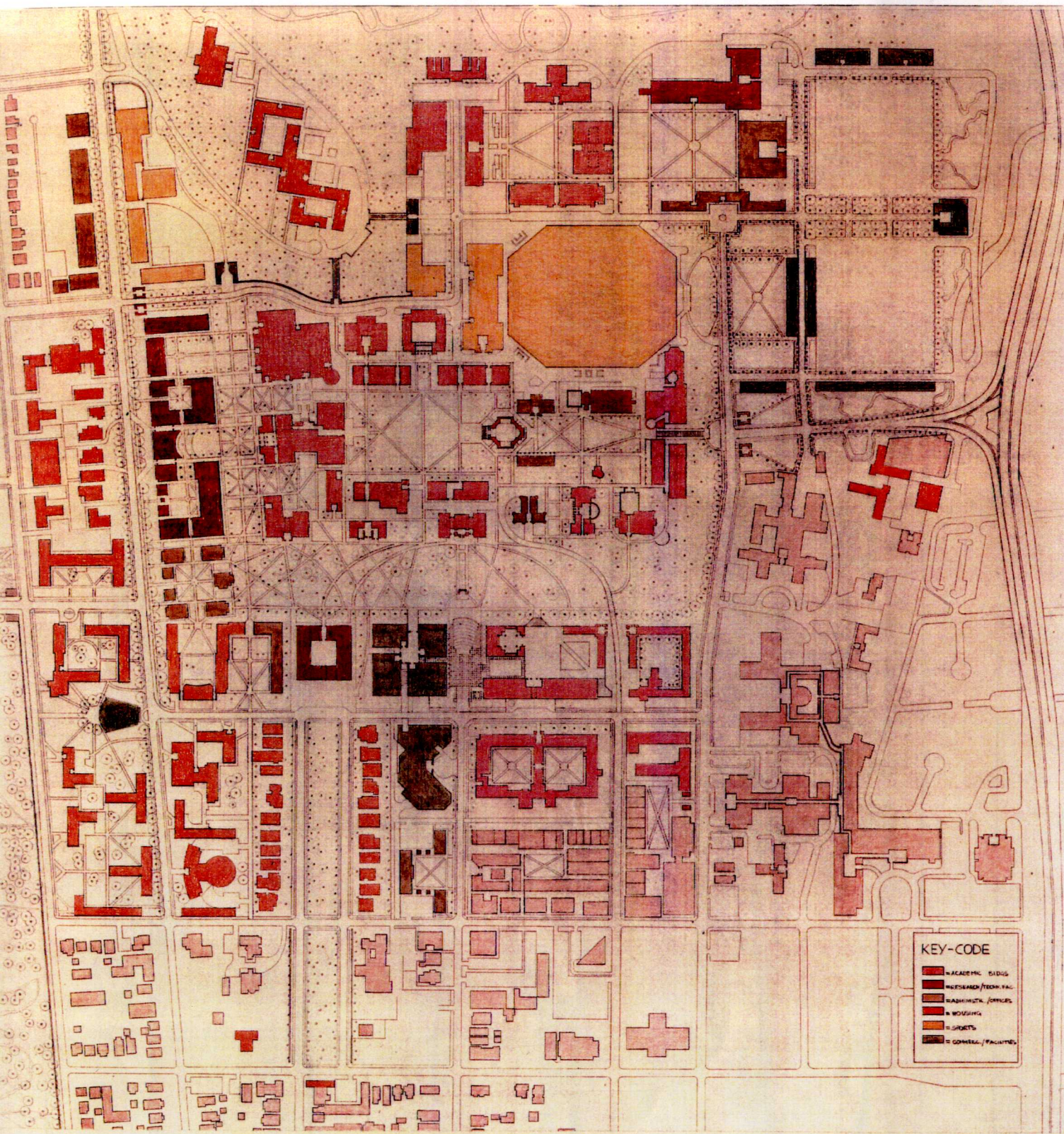












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